Binghamton, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today visited L-3 Communications in Binghamton, New York for a live demonstration of the company's unique Air Force Predator simulator and to announce $2.4 million in new federal funding he's secured for the company to dramatically improve the simulator to better prepare U.S. Air Force service members for operating unmanned reconnaissance missions. Hinchey used his position on the House Appropriations Committee to secure the funds, which he had included as part of the recently approved Fiscal Year 2009 appropriations bill for the U.S. Department of Defense.

"Once again L-3 Communications is leading the way with state of the art technology that will better prepare our troops to conduct unmanned Predator operations that are critical to our military's strategic goals while also helping to prevent any innocent casualties on the ground," Hinchey said. "I was very pleased to secure these federal funds, which will make it possible for members of our Air Force to practice operating the unmanned Predator with lifelike circumstances and visuals. L-3's work will improve our military's effectiveness, save lives, and ensure that the Southern Tier remains a leader in defense industry technology."

L-3's Predator Mission Aircrew Training System (PMATS) units were initially fielded with high-resolution urban area visual and radar databases that no longer meet U.S. Air Force mission training demands for effective combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result of experience gained in-theater, pilot and sensor operators now require additional capabilities to remain proficient with newly emerging Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) employment tactics. These focus on the addition of high-density pedestrian and vehicular traffic and urban clutter not available in the current data bases. These enhancements to PMATS real-world visual and correlated radar databases are essential for more effective in-theater and global surveillance operations, and were not included in the original Air Force budget request formulated before the additional requirements were established.

The $2.4 million Hinchey secured will develop the high-density urban environment visual and radar data bases essential for Predator pilot and sensor operator training. Specifically, this funding will add the required mission realism by developing more realistic and greatly expanded movement and interaction of people and vehicles. Funding will build into databases individuals and crowds reacting intelligently and in masses, instead of the current system in which a token few individuals are displayed. Human intelligence will be incorporated for real-time interaction with events in the training scenario (street market activity, aid distribution, political demonstrations, terrorist activity against crowds, warfighting activity in proximity to the populace).

All computer-generated entities such as pedestrians, vehicles, structures, natural and cultural features will be designed so that natural physical interactions, limitations, and restrictions occur automatically to produce the fully immersive training experience required for successful combat operations. System development will integrate multiple commercially available technologies to form the cohesive synthetic urban environment required by Air Combat Command, while reducing developmental costs.